



Good Morning Mister Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Mechille Johnson. I am the President of Artisan Dance in Helena. I am testifying on behalf of grant # 1245 requesting funding for an operational support grant for a professional ballet company.

A Collaborated statement from our Br.

We would like to say that we understand about the grant cuts and it is to be expected, however, most grants were cut by approximately 30%, whereas we were cut by approximately 72% bi-annually. This is a tremendous hit to our budget! (We were getting \$14,000 bi-annually and now we will only receive \$4000 bi-annually).

Artisan Dance, in residence at Carroll College, is the only professional ballet company in Montana. I want to emphasize that "professional" means that these ballet dancers are required to apprentice at least 10 years of training focusing on developing their talent artistically and technically. They are independent adults, earning a living from dancing. I wanted to make you aware of this distinction so that you do not think that we just have school kids performing, but that Artisan brings already well-trained dancers from all over to share their art with the community of Helena. In the past we've only been able to pay these dancers a mere \$150 per week in total and nothing else. With the new proposed cuts we don't know how we can afford to pay them at all, because we use the grant money ^{for their} to pay ~~them~~.

We are very lucky to get such high-caliber dancers because they desperately want to work with our Artistic Director SallyAnn Mulcahy. Our pro-dancers are willing to come to Helena for 6 full weeks of training with SallyAnn.

SallyAnn comes from a well qualified background in the ballet world, such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, New Jersey Ballet and Finis Jung Ballet of New York. She is a master ballet teacher as well as a recognized

choreographer. She was recently chosen as 1 of just 10 choreographers in the Pacific Northwest to be selected by the National Dance Project to attend a 10 day regional workshop in Portland last spring. SallyAnn teaches ballet

at Carroll College here in Helena. *As you can see from this Brd. S/A was recognized in the Nationally Syndicated Teachers Magazine.*

Artisan Dance has many fans who relish SallyAnn's creations that interpret local Montana stories into the magic of ballet. "Out of Ashes"- is a ballet that she created about the Mann Gulch Fire, "Coming Home" is a ballet depiction of Montana and western life, "Transcendence" is a ballet created in honor of a local boy who passed away at a young age and "Montana Dream" is a Montana version of the famous "Nutcracker" ballet.

We have a lot of community support with "In-kind" services for our photography, TV interviews and of course Carroll College. Even with these donated services we still rely heavily on the grant money.

Artisan Dance with our high caliber art impacts and encourages, not only our locals, but people from all over Montana, especially ballet dancers, schools, artists of other mediums and of course the regular public. They are inspired, enriched and entertained.

We have such a unique talent her in Helena and for our state of Montana and we sincerely ask you to reconsider our 72% loss. Without this grant money we may not survive. It would be ashamed to lose one of Helena's biggest art contributors.

Thank you for your time and please read the comments and the materials compiled in our packet.